

BOLIVIA

The Indian March Continues

More than 200 representatives and magistrates of the Isiboro-Secure National Indian Park Territory (TIPNIS) met in their Second Special Session in the town of San Bernardo. They resolved to march on Trinidad to demand compliance with Supreme Decree 22610 and to assert the rights of the Mojenos, Chimanes and Yuracares who live in that region.

The Bolivian government issued Supreme Decree 22610 following the historic march "For Territory and Dignity" in 1990, but its provisions have not been implemented or enforced.

In a communiqué, the Indians of the TIPNIS asserted that this time, "despite the good intentions of some members of the government, we have encountered many problems including opposition from several groups and individuals who do not wish to grant us the same rights enjoyed by every other Bolivian citizen. This behavior indicates that there are people who continue to think like the Spaniards of 500 years ago."

The representatives assert that Article 2 of Supreme Decree 22610 expands the area of TIPNIS to the Isiboro and Secure rivers, incorporating the communities situated on the banks of the rivers and forming a buffer zone.

On October 19, 1992, TIPNIS brought a case before the prefect of the Beni regarding a wealthy land owner, Sergio Zelada, who was attempting to deny the rights of the community of Loma Alta, located on the right bank of the Isiboro River within TIPNIS.

On October 27 the legal counselor of the prefecture of the Beni visited Loma Alta and decided that there was no infraction. The Prefect then denied the TIPNIS claim.

The Indian representatives who attended the second special session in San Bernardo resolved to reject the opinion of the public attorney and the prefectural resolution, because the title that Mr. Zelada has in his possession belongs to another person and was obtained after Supreme Decree 22610.

The delegates denounced these anti-Indian acts and bureaucratic decisions. They stated that in this democratic day and age, there are bad Bolivians in government who neither execute nor respect the laws which the government itself has made.

For these reasons, the authorities of TIPNIS marched to Trinidad to demand a public hearing to force the execution of the decree. If this is not done, the delegates will be obliged to fight until their territorial rights are respected.

Source: Aquí, Bolivia

Moseten Indians Compete with Loggers for Land Title

Approximately six years ago, the Moseten Indians of Santa Ana de Huachi, Beni Province, began proceedings to obtain the deeds to the lands that they have lived on for generations. With the support of the Lay Movement for Latin America (MLAL), they succeeded in attaining 8,000 hectares of land. But the land that was granted turned out to be ill-suited for hunting, fishing, and agriculture, the mainstays of the Mosetenes. In addition, the lands have already been exploited by colonizers, who have cut down the most important and valuable trees.

In November 1992, the community decided to ask the Minister of Campesinos, Agriculture, and Fishing, the Indigenous Institute of Bolivia (IIB), and the government for land in the Muchane plains as compensation. An 1880 document gives the Mosetenes sole ownership of the territory, which is four hours away from Santa Ana. The

director of the IIB assures the community that their demand will be considered, but there are other people interested in the land.

Juan Torres, National Deputy and former member of the Conscience of the Country (CONDEPA, a neopopulist organization) claims to have deeds to the territory. According to the Mosetenes he has been extracting resources from the land.

A company named San Lorenzo also intends to take advantage of the lumber resources. Timber exploitation is intense in that region of La Paz. According to a report by the Coordinator of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples, approximately 60 trucks, each with five logs, leaves the forest along one road each day. This means that at least 108,000 trees are cut annually. Much of the wood goes to waste because it is cut poorly.